

unless experience shows that the scar in the lower segment is much stronger than the one in the upper part of the body of the uterus. One would scarcely expect, in the present condition of affairs, an operation largely perfected in Germany to be popular with a British obstetrician. The author regards vaginal Cesarean section as an operation of great value, but used too freely. Up to the twenty-fifth week of pregnancy it is the best way of rapidly emptying the uterus, after the abdominal route is preferred. Vaginal section should never be chosen in placenta previa. The author would perform abdominal Cesarean section in placenta previa in elderly primiparæ with active bleeding, undilated cervix, and viable child. Despite the recent literature upon the subject, in accidental hemorrhage the author clings to the tampons where the membranes are intact, and the bleeding external, but what he would do when the placenta separates with retained blood, is not clear. He does, however, condemn the use of the bags, the Bossi, and similar dilators. He admits that in concealed hemorrhage section may be necessary, and prefers vaginal operation. In the field of English obstetrics Kerr's book is easily the best upon obstetric surgery, and we welcome a new edition and learn with great interest the views of this author.

The State and the Birth Rate.—The question of what can be done to prevent a falling birth rate has been recently studied by the authorities of the British Empire, and the local government board has recently received the report of the commission appointed to inquire into the decline of the birth rate of England. In the London letter to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, dated July 3, 1916, and published in the *Journal* for July 29, 1916, it is stated that this report advised that the sale of certain drugs widely used for the purpose of abortion should be made illegal. Measures must also be taken to lessen the ravages of venereal disease. The most difficult problem consists in educating the public opinion to condemn effectively vice which brings about disease. It is also necessary to improve the living conditions and adjust the burdens of taxation for that class of the population capable of producing the best children, and caring properly for them. The large, and socially valuable middle class should receive especial attention from this standpoint. It is also urged that immigration to healthy portions of foreign possessions be encouraged, and the taxation should be adjusted as to bear least heavily upon those who are rearing families.

An Infant Mortality Rate of Zero.—A community in which the infant mortality has been reduced to zero presents much of interest in view of the increased value at present attributed to infant life. In a paper published in the London *Lancet*, May 6, 1916, Moore, an English medical health officer, learned that Villiers-le-Duc, a little commune in the south of France, had an infant mortality rate of zero for ten years. This seemed incredible, but on applying to the French Academy of Medicine, official documents showed that between 1893 and 1903 no child under one year of age had died in this commune, and no mother had died in childbirth. The infant mortality for the preceding ninety years had been from 20 per cent. to 30 per cent. except from 1854

to 1863, when it fell to 15 per cent. During this time a mayor was elected who was interested in public health and the care of children, and although not a physician he did his utmost for the health of the people. The low death rate just described has been obtained by the son of the former mayor, who studied medicine to obtain knowledge with which to carry out plans for the welfare of the people. In this commune every pregnant woman, married or unmarried, who needs help can apply to the village authorities, and must do so before the seventh month. The patient may select a competent midwife, who must examine her, and if albuminuria, abnormal presentation, or other abnormalities be discovered the midwife must notify the village authorities, who then causes the patient to select a physician. If the patient remains in bed six days after her confinement she has an allowance from the village for her expenses for each day. Mothers or nurses who can show a healthy nursing child a year old are entitled to municipal grants. Other regulations were made providing for the sterilization of milk and the welfare of infants placed out to nurse. It is true that these statistics are obtained in a small village with simple rural conditions, nor are the statistics available of the population, number of births, and changes in population due to immigration. These facts make the statistics less valuable and others more accurate. They are, however, still interesting, and the simple regulations enforced and their success are certainly suggestive.

The Internal Secretion of the Pancreas in its Relation to Pregnancy.

—FALCO (*Annali di ostetricia*, No. 1, 1916) has made researches upon animals in the pregnant condition, extirpating the pancreas and then studying the condition of the animal. He finds that the removal of the pancreas seems to diminish somewhat the growth in function and activity of the cells in Langhan's layers of the syncytium. The extirpation of the pancreas does not cause pregnancy to terminate, nor does it produce glycosuria. It naturally produces the symptoms of pancreatic diabetes. This does not seem to influence the internal secretion of the fetal pancreas, as evidently the abnormal products formed in the mother's body are disposed of by the fetus and by the placenta. The placenta evidently has an important part in the disposition of physiological products in the mother and fetus.

Viburnum Prunifolium to Prevent Abortion.—In recent numbers of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* has appeared the testimony given in a suit brought against the *Journal* in which various statements are made concerning the efficiency of viburnum in preventing or checking abortion. The reader of these conflicting statements must judge for himself. So far as the reviewer's experience goes he has no positive and accurate evidence that viburnum prevents or stimulates uterine contraction, or prevents or stimulates abortion. He has used it, but always in compounds with other drugs whose actions are well known. So far as his experience goes two medicinal substances lessen or prevent contraction of the uterus. One comprises that class acting as sedatives to the general nervous system, of which bromide of sodium is a good example. The other is opium, the most reliable drug which we possess in preventing uterine contraction and lessening its vigor.